

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

UNCLAS AUCKLAND 0156

E.OGM 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, NZ

SUBJECT: PRODUCT OPPORTUNITY: CITY BUSES

AUCKLAND REGIONAL AUTHORITY (ARA) IS PLANNING PURCHASE 50 CITY BUSES TO REPLACE LARGE PART OF OBSOLETE FLEET. ARA IS A LOCAL BODY OPERATING MANY PUBLIC SERVICES IN AND AROUND GREATER AUCKLAND AREA. HUNGARIANS APPEARED TO HAVE DEAL LOCKED UP, BUT IT IS NOW REOPENED.

I CONFERRED WITH CHAIRMAN OF ARA TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WHO JUST RETURNED FROM TRIP TO HUNGARY TO EVALUATE IKARUS 190 BUS. TECHNICAL EVALUATION OF IKARUS INDICATES IT DOES NOT AT PRESENT MEET SPECIFICATIONS. HUNGARIANS CLAIM THEY CAN MODIFY IT, BUT THIS IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN. THEY WOULD HAVE TO INSTALL AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION WHILE KEEPING REAR AXLE WEIGHT DOWN.

FOLLOWING ARE MAJOR SPECIFICATIONS: MAXIMUM REAR AXLE LOAD 18,720 POUNDS; 70 PASSENGERS (INCLUDING DRIVER) HALF AS MANY STANDING AS SEATED; LOW FLOOR (REAR ENGINE); AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION; POWER STEERING; "AMPLE POWER" OR ABOUT 250 H.P. (U.S.); RIGHT HAND DRIVE. SOME OF THESE ARE IMPOSED BY N.Z. ROAD BOARD AND MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT. OTHERS ARE IMPOSED BY DRIVER TRAINING PROBLEMS AND FACT THAT MANY DRIVERS ARE WOMEN. FULL SPECIFICATIONS BEING AIR POUCHED. DELIVERY TIME WILL BE BIG FACTOR.

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PAGE 02 AUCKLA 00156 162201Z

GM REPRESENTATIVES VISITED ARA SEVERAL MONTHS AGO BUT

DECIDED THEY COULD NOT MEET SPECIFICATIONS. HOWEVER AT THAT TIME ARA WAS TALKING ONLY 150 BUSES IN ADDITION TO THOSE BEING SUPPLIED BY MERCEDES UNDER PREVIOUS CONTRACT. IN ADDITION TO THE 250 BUSES NEEDED NOW. THERE WILL BE CONTINUING DEMAND FOR ABOUT 50 PER YEAR.

I RECOMMEND COMMERCE CONTACT OTHER U.S. MANUFACTURERS TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANY COULD MEET THOSE DIFFICULT SPECIFICATIONS. TIME FACTOR IS IMPORTANT AS ARA MAY DECIDE TO GIVE UP ON HUNGARIANS AND GO WITH MERCEDES OR SCANIA. REQUEST REPLY ASAP AS TO WHETHER THERE IS ANY INTEREST. WILLIAMS

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